



**Roosevelt Island
Operating Corporation**

Roosevelt Island News

COMMUNITY, IDENTITY, CONVERSATIONS & INNOVATIONS

Issue 21: February, 2024

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Letter from RIOC Interim Leadership

Letter from RIOC Interim Leadership

Dear Roosevelt Islanders:

We hope this newsletter finds you well and that your 2024 is off to a wonderful start! As you are already probably aware, an interim change was made to RIOC leadership recently, and we—Dhruvika Patel Amin, RIOC Chief Financial Officer, and Gerrald Ellis, RIOC Deputy Counsel—have been appointed acting heads of the corporation, working in conjunction with RIOC Board Member Howard Polivy.

This appointment is a massive responsibility that we do not take lightly, but one we are proud to undertake for this community and for our RIOC team. In our time with the corporation, we have worked on a diverse portfolio of island-specific issues, including those related to housing, transportation, maintenance, and more. We understand the ins and outs of how Roosevelt Island operates, and we believe there are key ways that we can improve

those operations both internally and externally, starting with a stronger focus on collaboration, communication, and importantly, greater transparency.

In the coming days and weeks we will be working closely with all RIOC departments and our Board of Directors to understand how, as a corporation, we can better serve the Roosevelt Island community and fulfill our mission. Right now, our priorities are to steady the ship, ensure that our critical services are running smoothly, and assess how we can better improve our overall functionality. We have a strong team of people here at RIOC who are committed to doing their jobs to the utmost of their capabilities. We are proud of the work they've done and believe it's important for RIOC leadership to match their level of commitment, be present and available, and listen to new ideas, whether they come

from inside the corporation or elsewhere.

In closing, let us once again reiterate our commitment to greater communication and transparency, which are areas ripe for improvement from RIOC. We know the onus is on us, and we want to work with the public to develop a firm and trusting relationship. You're going to see us around the island, and when you do, we want to hear what you have to say. Changes won't happen overnight, so we appreciate your patience, especially during these initial days. We have so much to be proud of here, and it is our shared hope that we can work together to build on the proud legacy and history of this beautiful island.

Thank you all!

-Dhru and Gerrald

Community Calendar



Now until February 11th

RIVAA welcomes you to their annual Black History Month exhibition, open now through February 11th. This year they are celebrating "Heroes: Real and Imagined".

The exhibition is curated by Micheline Hess, a Roosevelt Island resident. A comic creator, artist/illustrator and former RIVAA member, Micheline has reached out to artist/cartoonists for portrayals of their heroes from life or those heroes they have imagined and created.



March 8th, 9th, and 10th

Join MSTDA Adult Theater for their production on *Witness for the Prosecution* by Agatha Christie. This play is a gripping courtroom drama where a man is tried for murdering a widow to inherit her wealth. Will he survive the witness testimony and convince the jury of his innocence? Find out in March!

Employee Spotlight



Ana Christina Medina

Title: Youth Center Director

**RIOC Employee Since:
2020**

Can you tell us about your background and what you were doing before joining RIOC?

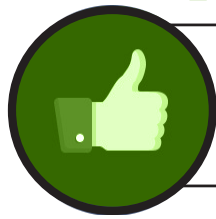
I am originally from Harlem and have 15 years of experience working with youth, teens, and adults in diverse professional settings. My background spans the higher education field as well as youth, family, and community development. I earned a Master of Science degree in Nonprofit Leadership from Fordham University and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology, concentrating in Counseling, from the College of Mount Saint Vincent. Previously, I served as a Teen Director at the Vanderbilt YMCA, where I was responsible for overseeing all branch-based teen and summer camp programming. Under my leadership, the program quality was enhanced, superior audit scores were achieved, and community partnerships were expanded. I also served as a Program Manager for the Sports & Arts in Schools Foundation (SASF), where I managed the expansion of seven middle school afterschool programs.

What drew you to the Roosevelt Island?

What initially drew me to Roosevelt Island was the iconic Tramway, as well as the island's stunning views of the Manhattan skyline and historical landmarks.

The Youth Center is one of the gems of Roosevelt Island. For those who don't know about it, can you give us a high-level overview of what you and your team are doing there?

The Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation's



Employee Spotlight

Youth Center is a vibrant hub for youth between the ages of 7 and 18. Operating as a New York State School Age Child Care (SACC) afterschool program (which includes special operating hours for half days and holiday camp when school is closed) and summer day camp, the center offers a secure and inclusive environment where young individuals can gather, socialize, and participate in a wide range of recreational, educational, and artistic activities. Through collaborations and partnerships with various organizations on the island, the center provides an enriching outlet for youth to explore their interests and talents, fostering a sense of community. Additionally, the center also features a dedicated teen night program to ensure that teenagers have a dynamic and engaging space tailored to their unique needs and preferences. With the tremendous hard work, determination, passion, and care of experienced leadership and staff, the Youth Center is an environment full of energy and excitement geared to establishing a road to success for our youth and community. Counselors and staff who are fully invested in successful, robust programming are able to be creative and adaptable with work that is always evolving.

What type of programming is offered for families in the community?

At the Roosevelt Island Youth Center, our mission is to empower and inspire the youth of our community to become confident, compassionate, and capable leaders of tomorrow. We are dedicated to providing a safe, inclusive, and nurturing environment where young individuals can discover their potential, build essential life skills, and develop a strong sense of social responsibility. Through education, mentorship, and a wide range of engaging programs, we strive to foster personal growth, creativity, and a commitment to positive change in our community. One of our goals is to create robust programming that encompasses all aspects of youth development, ranging from college and career readiness to garden sustainability, civic engagement, and creating opportunities in athletics. Effective programming starts with providing access to those who may not have the resources to create their path. RIOC works towards building a collaborative environment here on Roosevelt Island by cultivating several partnerships with island-based organizations to enhance Youth Center

participant's experience through high quality program offerings. Through island collaborations and partnerships, the center is geared to serve as an outlet for youth to engage in recreational, educational, and artistic programming. For instance, the Youth Center has partnered with iDig2Learn to develop our environmental learning center and garden club, and the Roosevelt Island New York Public Library to facilitate our year-round chess club and our annual rated chess tournaments. Our partnership with Allergic to Salad has developed our culinary program, while the Roosevelt Island Disabled Association (RIDA) and the Roosevelt Island Senior Association (RISA) provide volunteer opportunities for our youth and teens. The Youth Center has also collaborated with Main Street Theatre Dance Alliance (MSTDA), Green Roosevelt Island Neighbors (GRIN), PS/IS 217 Parent Association, PS/IS 217 Beacon Program, Coler Hospital, and Cornell Tech for special events to enhance community engagement on Roosevelt Island.

What does a typical day look like for you running a youth center?

Around 2:30PM, the Youth Center staff hit the ground running by picking up our participants from PS/IS 217. From 3PM to 4PM, participants drop off their belongings at their Youth Center cubbies and grab their homework, reading book, and extra snack. After completing their homework, participants can either complete a brain teaser of the day or read another book from our library. From 4PM to 6PM, participants have option-based specialty programming that they can choose from low to high energy activities. Then, from 6PM to 8PM, we begin our teen night program.

If a family wants to enroll their child in the Youth Center, how do they go about it?

Families interested in enrolling their children can register for our afterschool and teen programs at rioc.ny.gov/382/Youth-Center. You can also stop by at the Youth Center located at 506 Main Street and we will be happy to help you register online.

Finally, you get to see some of the best this island has to offer every day (its kids). What's your favorite part about working on Roosevelt Island?

My favorite part of working on Roosevelt Island is having the opportunity to immerse myself in the rich and diverse culture of Roosevelt Island. I take great pride in learning about the Roosevelt Island history and community traditions. I also enjoy seeing the community coming together and enjoying our annual community events that they look forward to.

Community Leaders

Frank Farance, President

Roosevelt Island Residents Association (RIRA)

rira.president.farance@gmail.com

How long have you been a Roosevelt Island resident?

44 years (1980), I moved here right out of college (age 21), and I've lived in Island House (555 Main) since then. Back then, it was like living in a large college dorm. The idea of the "pop up" from Seinfeld - visiting your neighbor without a phone call, just a knock on the door - was commonplace. Every building had to remind tenants to close and lock their doors.

The first winter (1980-1981) had the Tram - our only transportation - out of service for 5 months while replacing the cable. There was a baseball field right next to the Tram, but they closed it (now the tennis bubble) and the paddleball courts (now used for parking) because pieces of the Queensboro Bridge would fall down as they were repairing it. I met my first friends here (still friends) who were musicians. On Saturdays in good weather, we would do a "Motorgate", which was dragging our equipment to the back steps (near where the Tram sits) and we'd jam on Saturday mornings. Hangouts were by the AVAC and at the Meditation Steps. At the time, there were no cell phones, voice mail, or answering machines, just a single kitchen phone in many houses with a long long cord to the handset. About once every two months we'd see a taxi - it was a sighting we'd all share "Do ya see the taxi on the Island yesterday?".

I met Tony Capobianco (of Capobianco Fields) who ran the Youth Center. He was charismatic. When Sly Stallone was shooting Night Hawks, he got a couple youth in as extras on the movie set, and gave a premiere movie showing to kids. One day, Tony saw a big bulldozer coming to demolish a wing of Coler Hospital. Tony had a way with words and asked the demolition crew to raze the grass and debris on Northtown Field (where 475 and 465 sit). Tony pleaded, "it's for the kids, a baseball field." Tony Cap gave all of himself to the kids.

In the 1990s I became more involved in the community, first with Roosevelt Island Softball League (165 players, 13 men's teams, 3 women's teams). Then I joined Island House Tenants Association, where I helped privatize a Mitchell-Lama (M-L) rental into an affordable co-op (15 years of work), and preserve affordable

housing for another 35 years - the first in New York State, which provided a template for Westview affordable privatization. I volunteered at the Roosevelt Island Youth Program for a decade, with the support of Charlie Defino, setting up the youth robotics team, and winning first place in the City for teamwork, 7th place overall. I joined RIRA in 1996, I've served in several roles, including RIRA President in 2008-2010.

My wife and I were married in the church and had our reception at Lighthouse Park. I raised my kids here. Roosevelt Island is a fantastic place to raise a family. Our first group of Roosevelt Islanders (1975-1985) still have reunions, we call ourselves "The Originals."

You were recently elected head of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association, congratulations! For those who don't know, could you give a brief overview of what RIRA is and does?

RIRA was created in 1977 to represent the residents interests. Back then there was only Urban Development Corporation (UDC) and our City Council couldn't provide effective representation as UDC was a State agency. Note: RIOC came into existence in 1984 and replaced UDC.

There are two main eras of RIRAs: 1977-2004 a community representation entity by residents, organizations, and ex officio; and post-2004 as all-resident representation. Through RIRA, there has been a consistency of committees that have adapted over time, including public safety (PSD, NYPD, and other law enforcement), planning (infrastructure), services (things RIOC and other

organizations do), housing (common housing interests), social-cultural-educational (community events, schools), community emergency (preparedness), and a couple others. Our board of directors is called the Common Council, including the President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary. Typically, people participate in committee meetings and the monthly Common Council works at the management level to review and approve committee work and corporate actions.

What will your priorities be as RIRA President?

Highest priority is increasing Common Council, getting people involved, and doing more things for our community. For decades, every RIRA 2-year term, the board loses membership by the end of the term. Unfortunately, the pandemic has caused a significant loss. On the upside, we (like everyone else) figured out how to use Zoom and provide continuity.

The second priority is shifting RIRA to meet the changing needs of the community. Back in 1977, we were pioneers and strong activists to address the needs of our unique community; an Island community dependent upon the Tram, State Mitchell-Lama housing (different from City M-L), and our elected representatives didn't really understand us. We spent decades getting heard. RIRA President Matt Katz helped get the Tram integrated into the Metrocard



Community Leaders

system. RIRA's signature accomplishment is getting Island representation on the RIOC Board, the result of a decade of activism (1996-2006) by the Maple Tree Group (a RIRA committee), including a dozen of us activists (David, Matt, Sherie, Margie, Dick, Linda, Joyce, Steve, Nuruit, myself, others). As recently as the 2010s, the 911 operators didn't know where Roosevelt Island is and what the cross-street of the emergency on Main Street (hint: none). Tragically, a resident died because the ambulance didn't know where to go. In 2013, we had our own George Floyd moment with a resident who was beaten in the hands of PSD officers. I broke the story and RIRA's Public Safety Committee, led by Erin Feely-Nahem, changed the structure and leadership of PSD. We had a new chief, Jack McManus, and new model called "Community Policing", which continues to provide for a safer community and a collaborative relationship with our local law enforcement. We have the safest community in the City, and we have the best relationship with law enforcement. Many other great RIRA successes, too.

However, the Island has been changing over the past decade: with the loss of affordable housing, apartment density has reduced, including the reduction of families and youth in the demographic mix. Even though approximately 600 new apartments were built since 2010, the Census Bureau reports the Island population remained virtual unchanged in the 2010-2020 decade. The last residential building, Southtown 9, is completing. According to the Island's General Development Plan, there's no more space for new residential buildings ... and the Island's transportation infrastructure is maxed out.

I've been listening to the community. What I've discovered is that the community now is more interested in stability and less interested in traditional activism. Another shift is that we, RIRA, should be representing the Whole Community - residents at Cornell, residents at Coler Hospital, and the Island's organizations. Although RIRA has continually advocated for Island organizations (e.g., Public Purpose Funds), our Common Council should support membership from Island organizations, Cornell students, and Coler residents.

We meet the first Wednesday of every month at 8 PM. For now, we are continuing the Zoom monthly meetings and you are welcome to participate. But, I've been holding smaller in-person meetings to hear constituent concerns, such as residents of The Landings (formerly Eastwood) having concerns about security and package deliveries, Manhattan Park and Southtown residents and their concerns. Please contact me at rira.president.farance@gmail.com



You're also well-known in the community for your work on issues of health and safety. You've hosted several zoom seminars on an array of different topics, could you tell us about some of those?

I have two decades experience and training in emergency management, and I teach in other parts of the City, too. My emergency preparedness seminars provide better community preparedness (90%) over other programs (national avg is 55%), as measured by FEMA's methodology. My key innovation is regular communications with the community. Every month (or more frequently) is a new presentation that's relevant to the Island's needs. I pick from the "Buffet of Hazards", which are seasonal, aseasonal, and combinations that are specific to the New York Metro Area. I just completed a 4-month series on Fire Safety - the basics, holiday cooking, holiday decor, and E-bikes/batteries. In response to the recent earthquake, I repeated the annual October National Shake-Out Day training on earthquake preparedness. Regularly, I am training and responding in the field (Red Cross), so I bring back the best ideas and tips for our community.

And I definitely want to mention your work with the Red Cross; could you tell us about what you've been doing in the community there?

I'm a supervisor in the Disaster Action Team (DAT) of the American Red Cross of Greater New York, which covers the City, Long Island, Westchester, Rockland, West Point, and Greenwich CT. As a DAT responder, we're going out to local disasters - a dozen or so every day - in New York City. I was at the Bronx building collapse, 5-alarm fire in Sunnyside, and 4-alarm fire New Year's

Eve in East New York. I've responded to Roosevelt Island emergencies, too. Most of the local disasters are home fires - a very sad and upsetting event. We are trained in multiple roles to alleviate human suffering. Sometimes we're doing damage assessment (to determine eligibility for housing and financial services), or mass care (providing blankets, clothing, snacks, water, feeding, temporary shelter, etc.), or case work (following up with clients to address their immediate needs). The Red Cross provides immediate humanitarian assistance. We work with the City, community organizations, and others to help clients get started on their recovery. On Roosevelt Island, we participate in the major Island events, such as Roosevelt Island Day and National Night Out. If you'd like to volunteer, please join the Red Cross at redcross.org. It is rewarding work here, in Metro New York, and throughout the country. Truly, it is a privilege to serve.

I should also add: since the beginning of the pandemic - 4 years ago - I've been volunteering at the Roosevelt Island Disabled Association (RIDA) weekly food pantry. We have served over 1 million meals since the beginning of the pandemic - an even high privilege to serve our neighbors in need. Serving at the food pantry is the highlight of my week, every week.

Finally, you know the island inside and out. What's your favorite part about living on Roosevelt Island?

Unlike the rest of the City, I like walking down the block and running into a dozen familiar neighbors every day. It's an affirming feeling of "Being At Home" within our tight-knit community. Weekly, I "tour" the Island to take notice of things big and small, people and infrastructure, the Island and the City around us.

Updates from RIOC

Tikkit System

In Spring of 2019, RIOC incorporated a system called Tikkit, a software product of Gridium to be the central repository system for work orders. The system allows internal RIOC departments to organize, assign, provide status updates and document progress photos for work orders.

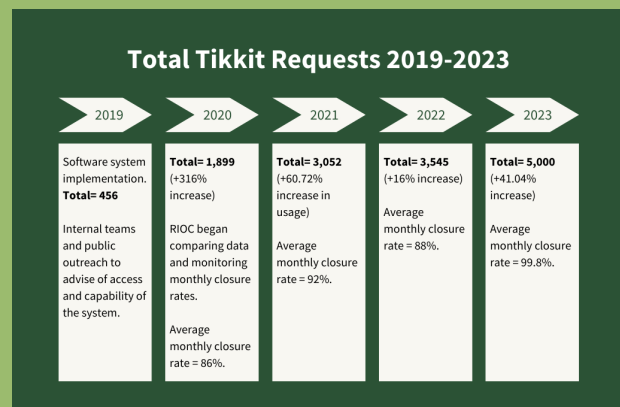
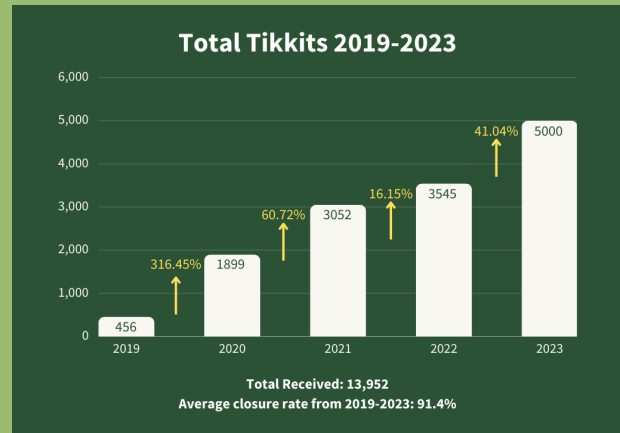
Tikkit provides a public facing component allowing community members to input questions or concerns which are directed to the department responsible. This streamlined process allows for increased communication with community members. We regularly monitor the data to track department performance, highlight areas of concern and proactively address operational items.

While analyzing the data from 2019, we received a total of 13,952 Tikkits and experienced an average closure rate of 91.4%. We will continue to use data as a benchmark to strive for future success within each department.

Experienced Results:

- Streamlined organization of tasks.
- Increase in department effectiveness.
- Proactive preventative maintenance.
- Decrease in process time.
- Increased tracking mechanisms and documentation.
- Data based approach to analyze operations.

A special thank you to our Operations Departments for their great work over the past 5 years to maximize the capabilities of this software and implement proactive initiatives to improve how we do business.



Masks Strongly Encouraged

As colder weather arrives, we recommend riders wear masks while riding the tram. If you need a mask, please ask the tram operator for one. Thank you for your continued commitment to the well-being of our community.



Updates from RIOC

Upcoming Changes to F-Train Service Every Weekend in February

The MTA has announced planned service changes to the F-Shuttle train service for Roosevelt Island every weekend during the month of February. Here is the information shared with us from the MTA detailing the changes in service for each weekend:

Feb 10-12th, 17-19th, 24-26th: NO Subway Service on Roosevelt Island

1. F shuttle train service will be suspended starting on Saturday at 5AM through Monday at 5AM on the weekends of Feb 10-12, Feb 17-19, and Feb 24-26.
2. Starting at 11:00 PM on Friday 2/10, 2/17, and 2/24 and for the remainder of each weekend, a free shuttle bus will replace the Q95 and Q94 and will extend to connect Roosevelt Island, 21 St-Queensbridge, and Queens Plaza, following the current Q94 overnight shuttle route.
3. This shuttle bus will run during daytime and overnight hours for the duration of the weekend and is scheduled to operate approximately every 5-10 minutes.

Other Methods of Travel

In addition to the MTA's free shuttle bus, island residents may utilize the following methods of off-island transportation during all February weekends:

Red Bus Manhattan Shuttle: During all weekends in February RIOC will run a Red Bus Shuttle to Manhattan every Saturday and Sunday from 3:00pm – 7:30pm. The shuttle leaves from the Tram Station at the top of every hour and picks up returning riders from the Southwest side of 2nd Avenue, between 58th Street and 59th Street, on the half hour.

Tram: RIOC is running the Tram on a rush hour schedule every Saturday and Sunday from 7:00am – 10:00pm during the ongoing MTA trackwork. Please be advised that we expect longer than average wait times for the Tram while this emergency MTA work takes place, so you should plan your travel accordingly. Extra PSD officers will be stationed at both the Roosevelt Island and Manhattan Tram stations during these weekends, and if you are elderly or disabled and need help reaching the Manhattan side Tram platform, please make sure to speak with one of the PSD officers on site.

NYC Ferry: The NYC Ferry Astoria line serves Roosevelt Island and can provide off-island transportation to Queens and Manhattan. You can check its schedule here: [ferry.nyc](https://ferry.nyc.gov).

Q102 Bus: Travelers can also utilize the Q102 Bus to Astoria for off-island travel. You can view its schedule here: bustime.mta.info/m/?q=Q102.

Highlights

Mulchfest



Thank you for tree-cycling! We've collected over 100 trees!

The holiday trees are chipped then turned into mulch to be used to nourish the island trees and plants. Thank you to the RIOG Grounds and Horticulture team for keeping the island clean and beautiful!



Highlights

What's New at Sportspark

Indoor Soccer/Volleyball

Starting in late fall, Sportspark had added Tuesday night indoor volleyball and Wednesday night indoor soccer to our gymnasium schedule. Anyone 13+ can attend these open games, form teams, and play! We have received tremendous turnout from our members and drop in guests for both of these weekly activities.

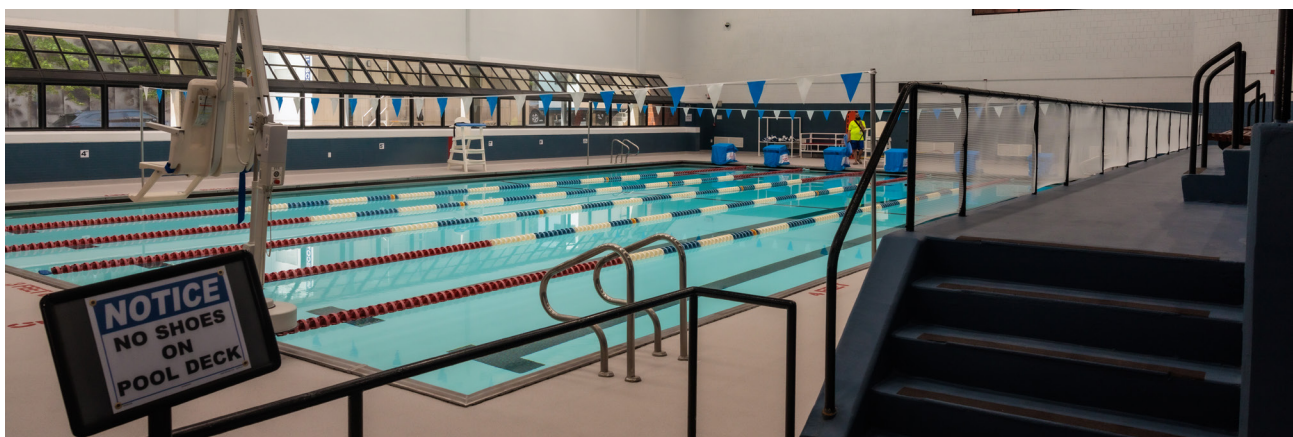


Winter Swim Classes

Our winter swim classes commence on 1/21! This 8 class semester program has options for adults (18+) and for children between the ages of 6 months and 13 years. These classes cover all skill levels, progress in skill development week to week, and are led by our wonderful Standguard instructors.

Water Aerobics

New to Sportspark for winter 2024 are our 2x/week water aerobic classes. Available for anyone 18 and over, these low impact classes are a great way to work on your conditioning and strength, all using the resistance of the water.



Highlights

Co-ed Teen 3V3 Basketball Tournament



On Saturday January 20th, Roosevelt Island's Public Safety Department in conjunction with the 114th precinct hosted its second 3 on 3 teen basketball tournament at Sportspark. With 8 teams all vying for the gold medal, the games were competitive, hard fought, and most importantly, fun. In a tightly contested, highly defensive finals game, "No Hablo Ingles" squeaked out the win by a mere 2 points over "Sweet Yams" to secure the championship. We congratulate Matthew Matias, Noel Perez, and Carmelo Valentine of "No Hablo Ingles" on a job well done, and a special thanks to all of the RIOC departments that made this tournament come to life, including Public Safety, Communications, Operations, Youth Center, and Sportspark.



Highlights

2023 PSD Award Winners

Supervisors of the Year



Sergeant Akbar Afgan

Sergeant Akbar Afgan – Sergeant Afgan was bestowed the honor of “Supervisor of the Year” for his dedication and work to ensure the growth of the Public Safety Department. Sergeant Afgan has demonstrated that he is not only reliable but always willing to step up in the face of any situation. He has offered guidance to any officer in need and has displayed all the characteristics of a supervisor, which many officers aspire to become. Sergeant Afgan has demonstrated that he can handle any situation with grace and efficiency, and not be deterred by how difficult a problem may seem. He always manages to find solutions while keeping the community safe.



Sergeant Jomar Arce

Our second recipient of “Supervisor of the Year,” Sergeant Jomar Arce has all of the comprehensive skills and abilities that are necessary for maintaining a strong public safety department. He understands how to practically implement policies that will ensure the safety and security of the residents, employees and visitors of Roosevelt Island. Sergeant Arce has provided his services for over four years and has always displayed the highest level of integrity. He is ambitious and his superior work ethic has made him an extremely effective public safety supervisor.

Officers of the Year



Special Patrolman Jovy Darbouze

Officer Darbouze is one of a rare breed of law enforcement professionals. He is able to adapt and improvise to the myriad of services required by the community, with a keen sense of awareness and sensitivity to each individual and their specific needs. There are many aspects of public safety that cannot be quantified through arrests, summonses or reports and Officer Darbouze has provided these services without hesitation, and with the enthusiasm necessary to encourage a strong bond between PSD and the community. This award he has received is a testament to his superior abilities and efforts as a law enforcement professional.



Detective Brian Ortiz

Detective Brian Ortiz — Detective Ortiz has rapidly risen up the ranks of the Roosevelt Island Public Safety Department, a testament to his dedication, diligence and initiative. Detective Ortiz brings a unique skill set to his duties and responsibilities on a daily basis, and is able to perform his functions independently and with great precision. Detective Ortiz has proven that he is an asset to the community and this honor bestowed upon him is well deserved.



Youth Center Highlights

Roosevelt Island Youth Center



YC Recognition Board

Warmest wishes for 2024 to all our Youth Center families and participants! With the new year unfolding, we're delighted to present the Youth Center's "Recognition Board". Each month, the Recognition Board will feature different categories that reflect the values and skills we see in our participants, all within the playful context of our Harry Potter-theme. For January, the Youth Center recognized participants based on exceptional "teamwork".

Register for the Youth Center's Afterschool and Teen Night Programming by scanning the QR code



Afterschool Program



Teen Night Program